

MYSTIC FIRE DISTRICT

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March, 8, 2012

Honored Members; Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee;

I am writing to ask for support of Senate Bill 0025 and specifically 'Section 2 (b) (2) as it pertains to "Capital construction, improvements, repairs, and land acquisition at fire training schools, not exceeding \$28,200,000."

The bonding funds noted in SB #0025 are of vital importance, not only to the fire service in the State of Connecticut, but due to lack of suitable, accessible training facilities for our firefighters, to the safety of our citizens.

The condition of the regional training facilities throughout the State of Connecticut is woeful. Although some great progress has been made, notably the recently reconstructed New Haven Fire School facility and the soon to be completed Hartford County School at the Connecticut Fire Academy much more needs to be accomplished. These funds will allow for the refurbishment and revitalization of the majority of the State's Regional Fire Schools. Many of the structures at these facilities were constructed in the 1950's with many and varied resources. The longevity of the use of the training buildings and props, in many instances, speak solely to the resourcefulness of the schools operating personnel and the fire service in general. The fire service has stretched the facilities useful life some decades passed what should have been their useable life. Some members of this committee and the legislature at large have visited one or more of the facilities and can attest to this statement.

As Chief of the Mystic Fire Department, I and my firefighters have used the Eastern Connecticut Fire Training School in Willimantic since its founding. Personally, my first occasion was in 1971 when the facility was then 20 years old and in full swing training entry level (me) and veteran firefighters alike. The burn buildings at this school have been out of service due to unsafe conditions for years now as has been many of the other regional schools burn buildings.

It should be noted that this one school is the only facility in essentially the whole eastern half of the State from the shoreline to the Massachusetts border. Presently, firefighters in training have to use either acquired structures or travel to now New Haven and previously as far as Stamford to conduct live fire training. As a footnote my department has used the Union Fire District training grounds in Wakefield RI because there were no closer opportunities in Connecticut. That is the state of our regional fire schools.

As President of the Connecticut State Firefighters Association I respectfully request the committee to pass this bonding request favorably and allow for the Firefighters throughout our state access to viable, modern and safe regional training facilities.

I would like to also thank our Governor Dannel P. Malloy for his support of the Fire Service in the State of Connecticut by recommending this funding to assist by providing the facilities that we so fundamentally need to continue to excellently train and serve our firefighters, both Career and Volunteer.

Respectfully and Sincerely,



Frank C. Hilbert
Chief, Mystic Fire Department
President Connecticut State Firefighters Association